

References

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New observations of a Zairean endemic: Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei*

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Between 1993–1994, Marc Languy, Laurent Esselen and the author were resident in Goma, eastern Zaïre (now Democratic Republic of Congo). Situated in the centre of the Albertine Rift, this base provided an excellent opportunity to visit many sites within the Rift. During 6–8 February 1994, we visited the Lendu



Plate 1. Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei* site in the Djuju Forest, Lendu Plateau, Zaïre, February 1994 (Laurent Esselen).



Plate 2. Dusky Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza jacksoni*, Djuju Forest, Lendu Plateau, Zaïre, February 1994 (Laurent Esselen).

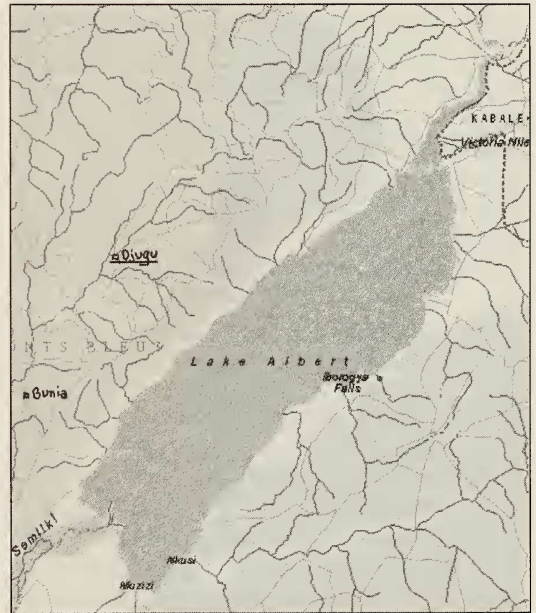


Fig 1. Map of the Lendu Plateau.

Plateau, an isolated highland region, west of Lake Albert (formerly Lake Mobutu) with the specific objective of observing two poorly known species, Chapin's (White-browed) Crombec *Sylvietta (leucophrys) chapini* and Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei*, although the former may prove to be a form of White-browed Crombec *Sylvietta leucophrys*²; further field investigation is needed before accepting this form as a valid species. Chapin's Crombec is known only from the Lendu Plateau, whereas Prigogine's Greenbul is principally known from the Beni-Butembo area, north-west of Lake Edward (formerly Lake Idi Amin), where a total of 14 specimens were collected between 1948 and

1981, and once from the Lendu Plateau, where a specimen was taken in 1926¹.

Prigogine's Greenbul is known only from specimen records. Therefore, any sightings would add enormously to our knowledge of this species. The only other ornithologist to have visited the area is J.M. Vrijdagh, in 1941–1942³. He recorded the superficially similar Joyful Greenbul *Chlorocichla laetissima* only twice, and as Prigogine's Greenbul was undescribed at this time, it is impossible to be certain which species he actually observed.

The Lendu Plateau is bordered by lowland savannah to the north, west and south, and by Lake Albert to the east. On this dry, largely deforested plateau, there are a few isolated forest patches of slightly degraded montane forest under serious threat from encroachment by the surrounding villages. There is a rich diversity of birds in these forest patches. When overflying the Lendu Plateau in 1993, we could see two main forest areas: Djugu Forest, close to Nioka village, and the other close to the plateau edge, east of Nioka, and difficult to access by car. Their size was difficult to estimate, but each could be c10 soccer-fields in total. Djugu Forest is situated at c1,700 m. It appears likely that these forests were once considerably larger than they are today. Logging by local villagers was evident everywhere.

We spent two days on the Lendu Plateau and searched Djugu Forest, near Nioka on 7 February from 12.00–16.00 hr and on 8 February from 09.00–14.00 hr. The first Prigogine's Greenbul, discovered by ML within an hour of entering Djugu Forest, was alone in the understorey of relatively damp forest and no calls were heard from this bird or those seen subsequently. The bird was observed for one minute before flying into dense forest. Another was subsequently found nearby, accompanying a group of 12 very active and noisy Joyful Greenbuls. It stayed with the flock until they disappeared from sight, two minutes later. The flock was observed along a driveable forest path, 1–3 m above the ground and were highly visible. The Joyful Greenbuls were very active, calling frequently and often flicking their wings. This was never observed from the Prigogine's Greenbul. It often perched on the large leaves of an unidentified bush. The following day another Prigogine's Greenbul was found near a small stream, following some very vocal Joyful Greenbuls. Its behaviour was similar to those seen the previous day.

Prigogine's Greenbul is distinguished from the Joyful Greenbul by the clear grey area between the bill and eye, and a distinct pale grey eye-ring. These characters are easy to see in the field through binoculars.

We searched for Chapin's Crombec for two days in Djugu forest and around Nioka, without success. Vrijdagh³ observed several individuals around the Nioka hotel (now abandoned) in July–November 1941–1942, and once at Djugu in November 1941. None of the threatened Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa (Aleaseonax) lendu* were seen during our visit, which is known from only two sites in Zaïre, the other being the Itombwe Mountains¹.

The Lendu Plateau is very rich in birds, and we saw many other interesting species. Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis* was common, Grauer's *Coracina graueri* and Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephaga quiscalina* were seen several times, Mangbettu Sawwing *Psaldiprocne (pristoptera) mangbettorum* was common and the endemic Bedford's Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone bedfordi* was seen once. A fuller species list is available on request from the author. Although we only spent a short time in the area, useful data were collected and future visits are urgently required.

Further information on the birds of Zaïre is available on the World Wide Web at <http://home.sn.no/~stingray/> or from the author. ☺

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